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Women Journalists In Thailand

By

Panit Pulsirivong
Women Journalist In Thailand

Mass communication is now one of the most important and challenging employment opportunity among university graduates in Thailand. During the past recent years, the demand in both government and private sectors are increasing and media people are recognized as one of the professional that requires academic background and experiences.

From the first time that the Faculty of Journalism was established in Thammasat University and the Mass Media and Communication Faculty in Chulalongkor University, there are now 5 government universities and 3 private university in which mass communication are being taught in the bachelor degree level and several other colleges who have mass communication as minor subjects.

Each year more than 1000 graduate and they could find job, directly or indirectly with mass media, within a few months so mass communication becomes more popular among high school students and competition in enrolling into the government universities is higher until reached the top last year.

Only a decade ago, this phenomena is unforeseeable and anybody involving in the media world were regarded as layman in the professional world.

The amazing proportion of female-male students enrolling or graduating in mass communication reveals that the first is always higher than the latter and gradually increasing each year until it is feared that media world in the future will be the women's world. Female bitterness and discrimination in journalism has already passed and young girls today are looking forward to new perspective; equality, stability and progressiveness.

What happened to female journalists in the past?

Since the first Thai girl applied herself to work in a press agency, she had to face several problems, personal and social, which deteriorate her enthusiasm and willingness. Many terminated their ambitions in the middle of their career and turned towards other conservative professions either willingly or forcefully to do so.

Journalism was an image of the men and only a few women can manage their way into the men's world. In those days when women were believed to stay home, working in a press agency meant being a reporter whose working hour in irregular Reporters started and stopped their work according to the news. No one could tell
when and where will the news happened and reporters had to be alert, waiting and looking for news all the time.

This such a work is unacceptable for parents and they became the first restraint for women to enter the media world.

Women were believed to stay home, get married, child-raising and doing housework.

But there were also some extroverts who managed themselves into journalism and were charmed by the excitement despite their parents disapproval. These very few female journalist were cheerful and received warm welcome from their male colleagues. They might gain more recognition and advancing to a higher position if not getting married, the second restraint for mediawomen.

Unfortunately marriage opportunity for femal journalist is higher than those participating in any other conservative career, teaching or nursing, since the were surrounded by men, either colllques or correspondents.

After getting married, pregnancy, child-raising and housework restricted female role within a house and when those busy days had passed, they were reluctant to come out from home and starting working that hard again.

Journalism is always considered one of the tough job for both men and women.

There were very few female journalists in Thailand and fortunately any person who struggling that hard for a long time are well known and became a good example for the following generation.

We have Kunying Malee P. Snidvong, one of a pioneer journalist who terminated her career after getting married with a diplomat. Mrs. Sermsri Ekchai, a very famous columnist because of her sharp-tounge from her pen-name 'Sone Tale'. She was the chief-editor of the newspaper that her husband was also a columnist and co-founder. Mrs.Sermsri is now retired but still contributes some articles in magazines. Miss Anong Metprasart, the first female journalist who was granted with the United states Leader Grant to visit north America. She was famous of her outstanding courage in joining with the police team in order to ensure her readers with an express and genuine news.

And we also have Vipa Sukgit, former president of the News Society who still is an active columnist and reporter.

All those female journalists began their career from a reporter and progressing to news correspondent, columnist, or editorial but non advancing hereself to the managerial level.
We should carefully investigate into that problem.

The scope of working in the Thai press agency recently has changed towards more professional with an academic background. As well as newspaper has moved towards business oriented. Anybody with mass communication or journalism degree are welcoming into the media world no matter what their age and sex is.

Woman liberation movement stimulates sense of equality; equal pay-equal responsibility. A person is justified by capability, efficiency and willingness to work which could be gained through experiences and hard working.

Female news correspondents in some fields are more favourable than male because they easily make contact and friendly relationship with a person being interviewed. Except criminal news, female reporters are as capable in social, economics, education, women and children, or even political and sport news.

They are working hard side by side with their male colleagues and trying their best to improve and upgrade the standard of journalism and other mass media in Thailand.

Journalism, as a business or industry, comprehend of other aspects beside presenting news; editing advertising, economics, production and distribution, layout and design and the most important part of all, management. These aspects required a professional skills in which could be gained through studying, training and practising. Either men and women can posses those qualifications if he or she is hardworking, talented, open-minded and lucky. The more experience and information exchanges can broaden the scope and managerial skills could be developed.

Editoring, for example, used to be considered only the men's task since female reporters can scarcely advance beyond chief news correspondent. But as social value changed there might be a woman editor or chief editor if she could proves herself to that standard capability.

Advertising prefers female staffs than male because women are blessed with such a gift. As advertising becomes more and more important to all kind of media, there should not be any restriction for women from advertising sector to progress to the management level.

Econmic is one of the subject that never bother whether the participants are male or female. Women tend to be born with economic-mind which starts from their own home. Being a woman seems to have advantage over male colleagues in terms of economics justification.
Production and distribution requires far-sighting in planning than any other aspects. As these two jobs are to be done by team, not individual, a person in charge of either production or distribution is selected by efficiency not by age or sex.

Traditionally, layout and design in journalism belong to men because these people have to work late into the night preparing for the morning newspaper. But in terms of designing alone, only aesthetic sense and skill is required.

Management requires all the above mentioned comprehensive aspects but it does not mean that a manager has to be an expert of all fields. A person advancing from mid-career to senior position depends upon several factors, professional skills, business-oriented mind and most of all chances and luck.

To my opinion, I see no disadvantage of being a woman in this media world and I sometime experiences some advantages over my male competitors. I always ensure my colleagues that chances of getting promotion does no depend on being a male or female.

Our company, Naew Na Newspaper, is a good example of business that recognized equality between male and female employees. Among our 184 staffs we have 70 or 38 percent women working with us, ranging from executive level to clerical. Employment and promotional opportunity is open to all who are willing to work hard and loyal to the company.

Day of discrimination in journalism had now gone. We are anticipated to brighter and better horizon of our mass media industry. Journalism is no longer a twilight zone for women anymore.

And last of all, I hope that this workshop will be very fruitful to me, Naew Na Newspaper and our employees, no matter what they are men or women.

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Bangkok THAILAND

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